

The attainment of calm abiding is followed by the development of special insight, so that special insight is generated based on, or conjoined with, calm abiding.

Please note that special insight and the meditative stabilization, which is a union of calm abiding and special insight, are attained simultaneously.

In order to develop special insight, practitioners initially harmonize calm abiding and analytical meditation by alternating from one to the other, because too much concentration would disrupt the process of analysis, while too much analysis would reduce the factor of stability.

If during the cultivation of calm-abiding a practitioner focused, for instance, on the image of the Buddha, he now also focuses on the image of the Buddha as the object of the analytical meditation, analyzing the image's features, height, color, and so forth.

When, through introspection, the practitioner notices that excitement is about to arise, he shifts to meditative stabilization (calm abiding) which single-pointedly focuses on the image of the Buddha, alternating back to analysis when the mind has stabilized.

Through this process of repeatedly alternating between analytical and stabilizing meditation, meditators are eventually able to combine the mental factor of calm abiding with the mental factor of analytical wisdom. This means that calm abiding and the analytical wisdom now operate in parallel at the same time, with equal power, one assisting the other. They have become concomitant mental factors and perceive the same object. When analytical wisdom further induces a mental and physical pliancy, imparting special stability and clarity to the analytical mind, practitioners attain the meditative stabilization that is a union of calm abiding and special insight, taking the image of a Buddha as the object. This enables them to gain a deep, clear, and intense perception, free from mental distraction and mental sinking.

The great Mahayana path of accumulation

As mentioned above, Bodhisattvas on the great Mahayana path of accumulation attain the *Mental Stability of Continuous Dharma*. (Tibetan: *chos rgyun gyi ting nge 'dzin*: *chos* = Dharma, *rgyun* = continuous/continuity/continuum, *gyi* = genitive, *ting nge 'dzin* = mental stability)

The etymology of this awareness is: a mental stability that is able to perceive continuously or uninterruptedly the words and meaning of Dharma discourses.

The meaning of *Mental Stability of Continuous Dharma* is: a meditative stabilization, which is a union of calm abiding and special insight, that yields a special potential to listen to instructions from *Supreme Emanation Bodies*, as a result of having purified the obstructions to directly seeing Buddhas and receiving Dharma teachings from them.

Hence, once Bodhisattvas have reached the great Mahayana path of accumulation, they are able to directly receive Dharma teachings from Supreme Emanation Bodies due to their attainment of the *Mental Stability of Continuous Dharma*.

Furthermore, since the criterion for entering the next path, the Mahayana path of preparation, is the cultivation of the 'meditative stabilization, which is a union of calm abiding and special insight *conceptually realizing* emptiness', Bodhisattvas on the *great* path of accumulation need to engage in training in the development of such a union.

As before, they alternately generate calm abiding and analytical wisdom. Yet this time, instead of focusing on the image of a Buddha, each of the two mental factors conceptually realizes emptiness.

After prolonged alternation, calm abiding and the analytical wisdom become concomitant mental factors, both of which conceptually realize the ultimate nature of phenomena. Once the analytical wisdom induces mental and physical pliancy, practitioners attain the 'meditative stabilization, which is a union of calm abiding and special insight, conceptually realizing emptiness'. This marks the first moment of the Mahayana path of preparation. Hence when the 'meditative stabilization, which is a union of calm abiding and special insight, conceptually realizing emptiness' is attained for the first time, the great path of accumulation has become the path of preparation.

Mahayana path of accumulation			
Small path of accumulation		Middling path of accumulation	Great path of accumulation
B O D H I C I T T A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Bodhicitta can still deteriorate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Bodhicitta cannot deteriorate anymore. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Practitioners attain the <i>Mental Stability of Continuous Dharma</i>.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Unless emptiness has been realized before, practitioners need to <i>train</i> in the different types of reasoning that establish the lack of true existence. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Unless taken before, practitioners need to take the Bodhisattva vow. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Practitioners need to <i>train</i> in the development of the union of calm abiding and special insight conceptually realizing emptiness.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Practitioners meditate on Bodhicitta, compassion, the six perfections, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Unless realized before, practitioners need to realize emptiness with an inferential cognizer. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Practitioners meditate on Bodhicitta, compassion, the six perfections, etc.
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Unless attained before, practitioners need to attain the meditative stabilization that is a union of calm abiding and special insight. 	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Practitioners meditate on Bodhicitta, compassion, the six perfections, etc. 	

THE MAHAYANA PATH OF PREPARATION

Tibetan: རྟོག་ལམ། *shyor lam* / pronounced: *jo lam* (*shyor ba* = preparation/ application/exertion/ connection, *lam* = path)

Etymologically, the path of preparation is a path that serves as a *preparation* for the path of seeing, i.e. for the meditative equipoise *directly* realizing emptiness.

As explained above, the first moment of the 'meditative stabilization, which is a union of calm abiding and special insight, *conceptually* realizing emptiness' in the continuum of a Bodhisattva is the first moment of the Mahayana path of preparation.

The Mahayana path of preparation consists of four levels, which are attained successively:

- 1) Heat
- 2) Peak
- 3) Forbearance
- 4) Supreme Dharma

Each of the four levels is again subdivided into three:

1. Small
2. Middling
3. Great

The 'meditative stabilization, which is a union of calm abiding and special insight, conceptually realizing emptiness' is a meditative stabilization that, unlike the inferential cognizer conceptually realizing emptiness, is free from mental distraction and mental sinking. It is a deep, clear, and intense perception, which has overcome *coarse* dualistic appearances. Furthermore, with each of the four levels (heat, peak, etc.) dualistic appearances become increasingly subtle.

Nonetheless, the path of preparation's clear appearance of emptiness is not the same as the clear appearance of emptiness of the path of seeing, since on the path of seeing emptiness is realized directly and non-dualistically, whereas on the path of preparation it is realized by means of a generic image of emptiness.

